



# THE HealthConnection



## Mental Wellness Be Kind to Your Mind by Annette Lerma, CPH

The holiday season is a joyful time for many. The crisp air, festive lights, music and thoughts of family gatherings can bring feelings of nostalgia.

But for others, these same things stir up feelings of great sadness and despair. Many times, this can be due to divorce, the death of a loved one or painful memories associated with the holidays or family history.

If you are in the “others” group, please know that you are not alone. There are many who report experiencing these same emotions around the holidays; in fact it is more common than you may think. NAMI reports that 64% of people who have a mental illness report that the holiday season makes them feel worse. But you don’t have to have a diagnosed mental illness to feel this way.

Many people feel the stress and pressure of financial strain, and the expectation to be social can lead some to feel anxious and actually withdraw from others. Learn to recognize these things in yourself and those around you.

There is no shame in experiencing seasons of sadness or loneliness. Everyone experiences these feelings at some point in life.

But if the feelings continue for longer than 2 weeks or are serious enough that they’re interfering with your daily activities, reach out to your family physician, a trusted minister or friend, or a mental health hotline such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
**1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

We should all be more mindful of those hurting during the holiday season and don’t be afraid to ask someone if they’re really okay. Everyone can use a little extra kindness all year round, but especially during the holiday season when many are feeling down.

Be kind to and patient with one another. You always receive back what you give away. Throw kindness around like glitter... where it gets all over everything and no matter how hard you try, you can’t pick it all back up!



## Food Safety Tips for Your Holiday Turkey

Handling poultry (chickens and turkey) incorrectly and undercooking it are the most common problems that lead to foodborne disease outbreaks linked to poultry. Follow these four tips to help you safely prepare your next holiday turkey meal.

### 1. Thaw Your Turkey Safely

Thaw turkeys one of these ways:

- In the refrigerator in a container,
- In a leak-proof plastic bag in a sink of cold water (change the water every 30 minutes), or
- In the microwave, following the microwave oven manufacturer's instructions.

Never thaw your turkey by leaving it out on the counter. A thawing turkey must defrost at a safe temperature. When the turkey is left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours, its temperature becomes unsafe. Bacteria can grow rapidly in the “danger zone” between 40°F and 140°F.

### 2. Handle Your Turkey the Right Way

Raw poultry can contaminate anything it touches with harmful bacteria. Follow the four steps to food safety—clean, separate, cook, and chill—to prevent the spread of bacteria to your food, family, and friends.

#### Take Care of Leftovers

The bacteria *Clostridium perfringens* grows in cooked foods left at room temperature. It is the second most common bacterial cause of food poisoning. The major symptoms are vomiting and abdominal cramps within 6 to 24 hours after eating.

- *Clostridium perfringens* outbreaks occur most often in November and December.
- Many of these outbreaks have been linked to foods commonly served during the holidays, such as turkey and roast beef.

Refrigerate leftovers at 40°F or colder as soon as possible and within two hours of preparation to prevent food poisoning. Slice or divide big cuts of meat, such as a roast turkey, into small quantities for refrigeration so they will cool quickly. Reheat all leftovers to at least 165°F before serving.



### 3. Cook Stuffing Thoroughly

Cooking stuffing separately from the turkey in a casserole dish makes it easy to be sure it is thoroughly cooked. If you cook stuffing in the turkey, put the stuffing in the turkey **just before** cooking.

With either cooking method, use a food thermometer to make sure the stuffing's center reaches 165°F. Bacteria can survive in stuffing that has not reached 165°F and may then cause food poisoning. If you cook stuffing in the turkey, wait 20 minutes after taking the bird out of the oven before removing the stuffing; this allows it to cook a little more.

Use a food thermometer to check for a safe internal temperature.

### 4. Cook Your Turkey Thoroughly

Set the oven temperature to at least 325°F. Place the completely thawed turkey in a roasting pan that is 2 to 2-1/2 inches deep. Cooking times will vary depending on the weight of the turkey.

Use a food thermometer to make sure the turkey has reached a safe internal temperature of 165°F. Check by inserting a food thermometer into the center of the stuffing and the thickest portions of the breast, thigh, and wing joint.

Even if your turkey has a pop-up temperature indicator, you should still use a food thermometer to check that it is safely cooked.

Let the turkey stand 20 minutes before removing all stuffing from the cavity and carving the meat.





## Diabetes Management

by Julia Agawu, MPH

Tis the season for Potlucks, holiday parties and family gatherings filled with delicious food! The holiday season brings about so much cheer as well as challenges. With the abundance of tasty but unhealthy options, navigating holiday season can be difficult when managing diabetes. Here are some tips to help you enjoy all this season has to offer!

- Don't skip meals in anticipation for a big splurge during gatherings. Keeping your regular meals can maintain appropriate blood sugar levels.
- Eating a snack or small meal before you arrive at gatherings can keep you full and less likely to overindulge during meal time
- Pick a few of your favorite dishes and enjoy them in smaller portions. Skip foods that are common year round and enjoy the more seasonal options.
- If you choose to indulge in alcohol make sure it is eaten with your meal to prevent spikes in glucose
- Bring veggies, fruit and healthy options to parties and potlucks to insure that you have options available.
- As it get busier and cold weather sets in, commit to exercising regularly.

### How to prevent slips & falls:

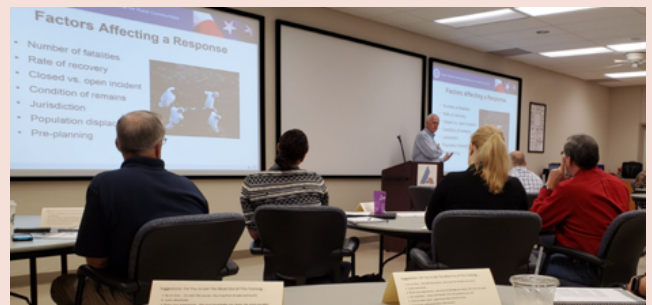
- Place de-icer, sand or salt down on walking surfaces before and after a winter storm
- When walking
  - Wear flat shoes or boots with good rubber treads
  - Take shorter steps and walk more slowly



Above: ATCPHD staff preparing to pass out treats to children from Day Nursery of Abilene.



Above: ATCPHD celebrated National Nurse Practitioner's Week.



Above: ATCPHD staff and other community partners attended two trainings related to emergency preparedness.



## Debunking Myths: From New Year's Resolutions to SMART Goals

by Kristi McQueen

Most resolutions made at the New Year don't last through Valentine's Day. And those that made a resolution to go to the gym may have started off strong, but usually quit after 3 months.

Studies show that less than 25% of people stay committed to their resolutions after 30 days and only 8% of people accomplish their resolutions.

New Year's resolutions aren't bad. However, they need to be well defined with a specific direction and plan. Instead of making resolutions, set SMART goals.

**S - specific**  
**M - measurable**  
**A - attainable/achievable**  
**R - realistic**  
**T - time**

For Specific, say how much weight you want to lose, or how many times you want to exercise in a week. Then make sure you can measure it. Instead of saying "I want to eat healthier" or "I want to exercise more," say "I want to eat 5 servings of fruit a day." That makes it specific and measurable.

Attainable, make sure it's something that you can reach. Attainable/Achievable often go hand in hand with Realistic. If the goal is something that you physically cannot achieve, then it is not realistic.

Lastly Time. Set a specific date for that you want to reach this goal by. Maybe you have a wedding that you're going to in a few months, or a vacation coming up that you want to reach your goal by.

Just remember to be realistic with setting the time frame. For losing weight, it is healthy to lose 1-2 lbs a week in order to maintain. You can use that to figure out how much weight is realistic to reach within a time period. And when setting these goals make a short term goal (less than 6 months) as well as a long term goal (6 months and more). This will help keep you on track as the months go by.

Now that you've got a SMART goal. Make a plan to reach this goal. If you don't have a plan or you don't write a schedule down for you to see, then the harder it will be to reach your goal.

### Last year's top 3 resolutions:

- Diet or Eat Healthier (71%)
- Exercise More (65%)
- Lose Weight (54%)

Also, don't wait until the New Year to start when you can start now! Today you can start building a habit that you can maintain once the New Year comes around.

SMART goals aren't only for weight loss and exercise, but can be used for any resolutions you may have.





## Indoor Workouts: Staying Active during the Cold Season

by Kristi McQueen

Don't let the cold weather discourage you from reaching your goals! If you're not a fan of exercising in the cold or going to a gym you can simply exercise at home! Below you will find some tips to workout at home along with some apps and programs that you can use to keep you motivated:

Getting fit and losing weight doesn't have to be expensive. There are a lot of great apps and programs that cost less than a gym membership and personal training with great results! You can find a specific app geared towards your interest or join a program where you have hundreds of workouts within your reach. Most offer beginner, intermediate, and advanced options so don't worry about where you are starting. Focus on where you want to be. And if one app doesn't work for you, then you can always find another, making sure exercise is something you enjoy!

Through these apps you can workout and track your weight and eating habits. They are also great for participating in challenges that will keep you motivated to reach your goal. Running apps in particular offer training programs to help you reach a goal whether its from couch to 5k or running a marathon. These workouts don't have to be an hour long. They can be anywhere from 10-30 minutes and still get you results! You just have to find your motivation, set a SMART goal, and get started!

### Fitness Phone Apps:

- MyFitnessPal
- 8fit Workouts & Meal Planner
- Runkeeper
- Home Workout - No Equipment
- Workout for Women: Fitness and Better Health
- 30 Day Fitness
- 7 Minute Workout: Fitness App
- Daily Yoga - Workout and Fitness
- Yoga Studio: Mind & Body

### At Home Online Workouts:

- BeachBody on Demand
- Openfit
- Daily Burn

[These are only a few apps and online programs, there are many more out there!]

## Abilene-Taylor County Public Health District Walks

ATCPHD staff participated in the "Texas Walks" event. This 10-minute walk provides people from all over the state the opportunity to connect with others while reminding them to make small changes in their lives to benefit their health.



## What is World AIDS Day?

Each year, on 1 December, the world commemorates World AIDS Day. People around the world unite to show support for people living with HIV and to remember those who have died from AIDS-related illnesses. Every year, United Nations agencies, governments, and civil society join together to campaign around specific themes related to HIV:

- Awareness-raising activities take place around the globe.
- Many people wear a red ribbon, the universal symbol of support for and solidarity with people living with HIV.
- Groups of people living with HIV and other civil society organizations involved in the AIDS response mobilize in support of the communities they serve and to raise funds.
- Events highlight the current state of the epidemic.

World AIDS Day remains as relevant today as it's always been, reminding people and governments that HIV has not gone away. There is still a critical need for increased funding for the AIDS response to increase awareness of the impact of HIV on people's lives, to end stigma and discrimination, and to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV.

Approximately 1.1 million people in the U.S. are living with HIV today. About 15 percent of them (1 in 7) are unaware they are infected. An estimated 38,700 Americans became newly infected with HIV in 2016. Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men bear the greatest burden by risk group, representing an estimated 26,000 of new HIV infections per year.

- In 2017, 38,739 people received an HIV diagnosis in the U.S. and 6 dependent areas
- The annual number of new HIV diagnoses in the U.S. remained stable from 2012 to 2016.
- HIV diagnoses are not evenly distributed across states and regions. Of the 38,739 new HIV diagnoses in the U.S. in 2017, 19,968 (52%) were in the South.



## About the Health Department

**Our Mission:** To provide preventative services to promote community health.

**Our Vision:** To be a premier, innovative health department, leading in the prevention of diseases.

### Our Values:

**Professionalism:** We exemplify professionalism through respect, excellence, and teamwork.

**Quality:** We provide exceptional, valuable services for our community.

**Integrity:** We serve with accountability and consistency to build community trust.

**Innovation:** We effectively use evidence-based strategies and best practices to advance public health.

**Collaboration:** We collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to promote community health and prevent disease.



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
**Abilene Taylor County**  
**Public Health District**



### Health District

850 North 6th Street  
Abilene, Texas 79601  
(325) 692-5600

Monday-Friday  
8:00 am – 5:00 pm

### MERCY Health Care Center

1902 Shelton Street  
Abilene, Texas 79603  
(325) 676-6634

Monday-Friday  
8:00 am – 12:00 pm  
1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

[abilenetx.gov/health](http://abilenetx.gov/health)

### Connect with us:



AbileneHealth  
MercyHealthCareCenter



AbileneHealthDepartment



AbileneHealth

## Upcoming Events

**December 2nd:**  
**World AIDS Day & Free STD Testing at Mercy**  
8:00-10:00am & 1:00-3:00pm